



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Billings Rod and Gun Club Proposed Improvements

2. Type of Proposed Action:

The Billings Rod and Gun Club (BRGC) proposes to improve the safety and convenience of the BRGC Range by:

- Installing safety fencing on two archery ranges
- Reconstructing three high/low houses on the skeet fields
- Installing card-operated electronic gates on the Club grounds

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Billings Rod and Gun Club range is located approximately 1 mile north of Billings, Montana, at 2931 Rod and Gun Club Road, Billings, MT 59106; Lat. 45.8248, Long. -108.5840; on the SW1/4 of Section 23, Township 1 North, Range 25 East.



Figure 1. Aerial View of Billings Rod and Gun Club Range, Billings, Montana.



Figure 2. Location of the Skeet House Project at the Billings Rod and Gun Club Range



Figure 3. Location of the Archery Range Project at the Billings Rod and Gun Club Range

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

(a)(i) Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;

(ii) May not limit the number of members;

(iii) May charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and

(iv) Shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or

(b) Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.

5. Need for the Action(s):

The need for the project is threefold:

1) The western Archery Range abuts a busy county road and the eastern Archery Range abuts the Sporting Clays Course. Arrows can land on the roadway causing a safety hazard. In addition, the eastern Archery Range is closed when the Sporting Clays Course is in use to prevent safety issues. Installation of safety fencing will prevent these problems.

2) The existing skeet houses are small, cramped, and potentially dangerous, creating a safety hazard for volunteers. The proposed reconstruction will include a larger house with a stairway (instead of a ladder) and will incorporate the means to load pallets of clays onto the high thrower area using a forklift, thus eliminating the need for carrying boxes of clays up a ladder.

3) The installation of electronic gates in place of the existing manually-operated gates will improve club accessibility for all shooters and for disabled shooters in particular. It will no longer be necessary to exit and reenter a vehicle twice in order to pass through a gate.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The BRGC plans to complete three separate projects on different areas of the BRGC grounds and will be completed at different times under multiple contracts. The objectives of the BRGC proposed projects are to improve the safety of archery and skeet ranges and to improve the convenience of the BRGC grounds by: installing safety fencing on two archery ranges; reconstructing three high/low houses on the skeet fields; and installing card-operated electronic gates on the BRGC grounds.

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

The proposed project would involve less than one acre of the 205-acre BRGC range.

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The BRGC range is located on 205 acres of private land owned in fee title by the Billings Rod and Gun Club. The property is not located within a floodplain and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The BRGC range offers shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, shotgun, black powder, archery, and

Cowboy Action.

9. Description of Project:

The BRGC proposed projects involve: constructing higher safety berms on three of the five bays; improving the storm drainage on four of the existing bays; and constructing three new field bays.

The estimated budget includes:

Archery Range Fencing (Materials and Labor)	\$ 19,110
Skeet House Improvements (KG Construction)	\$ 77,775
Skeet House Electrical (Reddi Electric)	\$ 1,895
Access Gates (Security Management Systems)	<u>\$ 43,370</u>
Total Project Budget	\$142,150
Total Funding Requested from FWP	\$ 71,075

10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

None

Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$71,075

11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:

The BRGC range is located on 205 acres of private land deeded to the BRGC. This is a non-profit, private shooting club with an annual membership fee of \$125 for individuals and families, with a day use fee of \$5 for guests and visitors. The BRGC hosts over 50 events each year. Over 10 organizations utilize the range, including: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Hunter's Education, Boy Scouts, Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation, local high school organizations, Magic City Action Shooters, Territorial Peacemakers, The Well-Armed Woman, National Skeet Shooting Association, National Sporting Clays Association, National Field Archery Association, and Big Sky State Games.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:

Because the BRGC is a non-profit, private shooting club for members, there has been no public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range development proposals have been discussed with the club members and the associated project vendors and contractors.

13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Matthew Waite, 3209 Turnberry Circle, Billings, MT 59101. (406) 208-3440.

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The BRGC is a non-profit, private shooting club. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is located 8 miles from the BRGC range in Billings, Montana.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission

of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 21, 2020.

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A, the Proposed Alternative, and Alternative B, the No Action Alternative, were considered.

Alternative A (Proposed Alternative) is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project), to improve the safety of the Archery and Skeet Ranges and to improve the convenience of the BRGC grounds. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.

Alternative B (No Action Alternative) Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The no action alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

None. Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations): None

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determine the extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		4
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		5
6. Existing water right or						

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		7
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		11

2. & 5. . There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may temporarily leave the immediate area during construction activities.

4. The elimination of vegetation for the implementation of the proposed project will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area. The proposed project occupies a small portion of the property. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has been disturbed in the area of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project will have a minor impact on native vegetation in the area.

7. The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils but the developments will not substantially affect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and disturbed area will be reseeded.

9. This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not apply.

11. The property is already used as a shooting range so the proposed project will have no additional impact on the aesthetics of the property.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		

2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		4
5. Human health				X		5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

4. Even though the BRGC range is adjacent to agricultural land used for grazing and hay production, the range has not been in agricultural production for years. The proposed project will have no effect on agricultural production.

5. The proposed project will improve the safety of the BRGC range and the surrounding residential community.

7. The proposed developments will increase shooting opportunities within the community.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the projects reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative.

The Billings Rod and Gun Club's Proposed Alternative, to improve the Archery Range, Skeet Range, and BRGC grounds, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

- Matthew Waite, 3209 Turnberry Circle, Billings, MT 59101. (406) 208-3440.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Andrea Darling, Darling Natural Resource Consulting, Montana City, MT 59634

Date Completed:

April 20, 2020

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Billings Gazette, Billings, MT* announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.